

## Research Paper



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## The Influence of Product Attributes on Intention to Purchase Pirated CDs among Malaysian Consumers

<sup>1</sup>Nor Azila Mohd Noor, <sup>2</sup>Azli Muhammad, <sup>3</sup>Nurul Afiqah Ahmad <sup>4</sup>Abdullah  
Ghani

<sup>13</sup>Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business, University Utara Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Commerce Department, Polytechnic Sultan Abdul Halim Muadzam Shah,  
Malaysia

<sup>4</sup>Islamic Business School, University Utara Malaysia

Corresponding author's email: [azila@uum.edu.my](mailto:azila@uum.edu.my)

**Abstract:** Pirated products are not a new challenge to manufacturers all around the world and had become a crime that is unstoppable. The problem had even before the development of the advance technology today. Pirated products can be divided into many categories such as medicine, fashion, movies, music and many more. However, this study only focuses on the pirated CDs. This paper sets out to examine the role of product attributes in influencing consumers' intention to purchase pirated CDs. Data were collected using intercept survey at selected night markets in Malaysia where pirated CDs are commonly available. Using a questionnaire, data from 393 respondents were collected and analyzed to test the hypothesis. Data were analyzed using descriptive analysis, correlational analysis and regression analysis. The results show that product attributes significantly influenced consumers' intention to purchase pirated CDs. Practical and theoretical contributions are discussed along with suggestions for future research avenues.

**Keywords:** Pirated products; Consumer purchase behavior; Intention; Product attributes

## INTRODUCTION

Pirated products such as pirated CDs are not a new challenge to manufacturers all over the world. The problem had started even before the development of the advance technology today (Chapa, Minor and Maldonado, 2006; de Matos, Ituassu and Rossi, 2007). Pirated CDs had become a crime that is unstoppable. This problem is getting worse in developing countries with weak law enforcement (Wilcox, Kim and Sen, 2009). By purchasing the pirated CDs, the consumer fulfils their need without realizing that their action could lead to future disadvantages. With the

advancement of technology, the pirated CDs nowadays are able to duplicate the original CDs movie's packages. The film industry called these as albies, slavish copies, knock-offs and the common name known as pirated.

Altinkemer and Guan (2003) stated that with the advance improvement of internet, communication and technology, the distribution of the pirated CDs for movies, music, games and software are becoming easier, faster and cheaper. With internet, a new door is open for people to access copyright movies without much obstacles. Through file sharing, music, software, movies, books, games and all types of entertainment from digital form can be accessed at zero cost (Horn, Maxwell and Crawford, 2004).

Hidayat and Diwasasri (2013) stated that consumer with good experience in purchasing pirated CDs could become repetitive buyer. They also believed that the low quality of the product could be overcome with the lower price offered by the pirated products. However, Liebowitz (2002) did not agree with this statement. He stated that when a consumer has an experience with pirated products, it will increase their intention to purchase the original product as the consumer can make comparison between the pirated products and the original product. Thus, this will encourage the consumer to avoid purchasing pirated products. This is supported by Peitz and Waelbroeck (2003). They believed that by giving the consumer a chance to use the original product for a period of time can actually encourage the consumer to purchase the original product.

Duchene and Waelbroeck (2002) further analysis the copyright protection stated that by increasing the copyright protection can affect to both the original producer and the buyers. This is because, increasing the copyright protection leads to the increase of technological protection and legal protection that will directly reduce the consumer surplus. This is supported by Poddar, Foreman, Banerjee and Ellen (2004), who believe increasing the protection against the piracy may not be considered as the best solution to tackle piracy problems. He further added that, the quality of the music/film downloaded is the key in controlling the piracy. In order to justify the claim by original producer, Hui and Peng (2003) conducted a study to find out whether the demand for original CDs will decrease with piracy. Their study found that the demand for original CDs decreased with piracy. However, the amount of losses caused by piracy is overestimated by the industry. The losses could actually come from the industry decision to increase the original CDs price while putting the blame on piracy.

Chellappa and Shivendu (2002) conduct a study on DVD movie piracy to investigate the effect of varying technology standards. They believed by varying the technology standard of DVD players in each country, could actually help to control the demand for the pirated CDs. This also allowed the movie studio to create variety of DVD at different quality in order to engage in discriminatory pricing. This study found that the firm that practices variable technology standard makes more profits than firm that practices common DVD standard. However, this proved to be quite ineffective as pirates are usually able to crack the code created by the firm that adopted variable technology standard. Thus, allowing them to modify the DVD players and make it able to play any DVDs. Hence, better security and technology standard are not the best option.

Many studies have highlighted the hurt of pirated CDs caused on economic interest of the original producers and how piracy issues discouraged them to keep

on producing creative products (Francis, Burgess and Lu, 2015; Qian, 2014). This is supported by Chen, Yu and Murray (2013) who believed piracy could hurt the economy of all party involved in intellectual property. Although Malaysia is also known as the home of piracy together with Thailand, there are other countries that are in more critical stage involving piracy. Mainland China and Hong Kong have been known as the largest home of piracy for decades (Hoon Ang, Sim Cheng, Lim, and Kuan Tambyah, 2001; Rahm, 2014; Castano and Eugenia Perez, 2014; Moores and Dhillon, 2000; Hennings, Klarmann and Labenz, 2016).

This is supported by Patiro and Sihombing (2016) who believed that the reason behind the high numbers of Asian purchasing more pirated CDs than Americans is due to their view on piracy as an ethical behavior. Therefore, these people have higher tendency to purchase the pirated CDs as they have positive attitude towards piracy (Hoon Ang et al., 2001). This supported Azjen and Madden's (1998) Theory of Planned Behavior, where they believed that behavioral intention towards a product is related to the consumer's attitude and beliefs of the products.

Prior research on pirate products such as Bush, Bloch and Dawson (1989); Green and Smith (2002) and Nill and Shultz (1996) were mainly concentrated on controlling the supply of pirate products (e.g., manufacturer, company, industry, retail channel, and government). However, efforts to fight against the supply of pirate products most of the time failed. Because consumers are likely purchase and use pirate products, what is more important is to investigate the factors that trigger consumer to choose pirated over the original products.

The present study attempts to fill the gap in the purchase behavior of pirate products that views the problem from the consumer side. After all, it is basic economic reasoning that if no demand for pirate products exists, supply will erode automatically. Thus, as consumers play a leading and growing role in the existence of piracy trade (Yoo and Lee, 2009), it is important to gain a deeper insight in potential factor influencing purchase behavior of pirated products. Specifically, this study focuses on the influence of product attributes on intention to purchase pirated CDs among consumers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Undeniably, product attributes are important element in consumer decision-making process (Puth, Mostert and Ewing, 1999). They are central to product evaluation and preference formation (Wen Wan, Peng Chen and Jin, 2017). Stokmans (1991) indicates that a product can be viewed as a bundle of intrinsic and extrinsic attributes, or as a bundle of perceived attributes. The intrinsic attributes of the product are information cues directly linked to the product, and the extrinsic attributes are information cues, which are indirectly connected to the product (Stokmans, 1991). This view is in line with a number of previous studies (e.g. Romaniuk and Sharp, 2003; Holden, 1993). In the same vein, Keller (1993) stated that product attributes are those descriptive features that characterize a product, which can be categorized in a variety of ways (Myers and Shocker, 1981).

A positive relationship between linkage of the brand and perceived product attributes and brand choice/preference has been found by many researchers (e.g. Enneking, Neumann & Henneberg, 2007; Auger, Devinney, Louviere and Burke,

2010; Bronnmann and Asche, 2016) where most of the research indicates that the more positive the consumers' perceptions on the product attributes of a specific brand, the more chance the branded product being purchased.

In the context of purchase behaviour of pirated product, there are countless of studies that focused on product attributes as a main factor influencing consumer intention and behaviour to purchase pirated products (Lu, 2013; Kim & Karpova, 2010). This is supported by previous study by Eisend and Schuchert-Guler (2006) who believed primary factors of pirated products purchase is the product attributes. Part of the previous studies that using product attributes as the factor influencing consumer intention in purchasing the pirated products are focusing on utility, product appearance, durability, performance and perceived quality (Cordell, Wongtade, and Kieschnick, 1996; Kim and Karpova, 2010; Phau and Teah, 2009; Tang, Lee and Mitchell, 2014, Wee, Ta and Cheok, 1995).

Although it is common to associate pirated products with low in quality, there is a new development level for pirated products with almost the same quality of the genuine product (Hilton, Rajendran and Tellis, 2004). The demand for the high quality pirated products are on the rise. Pirated products producers are able to increase the quality of a pirated products through widely available, easy accessible and cheap new production technologies (Alcock, Chen, Ching and Hodson, 2003; Gessler, 2009). It is stated that it is hard for the consumer to differentiate between the genuine product with the pirated products due to the advancement of quality technology and material used to create the pirated products (Gentry, Schiffman and Kanuk, 2006). Moreover, consumer believed that there might be no noticeable difference in perceived quality between the genuine products with the pirated products (Ahmed, 2016).

A quality product is a product that fulfil the functional attributes as promised by the manufacturers. Most of the pirated products consumer are unlikely to be concern with quality of a product as they are restricted with limited budget (Jiang and Cova, 2012). The consumers are more likely to purchase pirated products when the original or genuine product is too expensive for them; making them settle for second alternative. Thus, by abandoning quality, the consumers will likely to purchase pirated products.

Poddar, Foreman, Banerjee and Ellen (2012) found that although consumers found the low price offered by the pirated products as attractive, not all consumers are willing to purchase them. This could be due to certain perception that pirated products carry low quality product. This type of consumers is willing to pay more than their reference price as they are very concern with the quality of the product purchase by them. Therefore, the quality is still important determinant influencing consumer attitude towards purchasing the pirated products.

Pirated products usually associated with inferior quality. Tan (2002) explained that awareness of performance risk due to inferior quality have a negative relationship with the intention to purchase the pirated products. However, consumer of pirated products believed that high price does not indicate high quality and so goes vice versa. This believe initiated the consumers to purchase the pirated products (de Matos, Ituassu and Rossi, 2007; Phau and Teah, 2009). Gentry et al. (2006) believed that there might not be significant difference in perceived quality for pirated products as pirated products is the cheaper alternative to the expensive genuine products while Chaudry and Stumpf (2012) and Poddar et al. (2012) agreed

that consumers are willing to pay for the visual attributes and function of the product with no consideration of the associate quality. One of the important consideration in purchasing pirated products is the functional benefits (Chadha, 2007; Cordell et al., 1996). This is supported by Eisend and Schuchert-Guler (2006) that as long as the functional requirement of the pirated products met, consumers will be satisfied with their purchase.

The quality of the pirated products has improved with the advance of the technology, making the pirated products quality to a higher level and creating a competitive advantage to pirated products (Triandewi and Tjiptono, 2013). Bian and Veloutsou (2007) and Hennings, Klarmann and Labenz (2016), added that certain pirated products were allowed to be tried first before the purchase to test the functionality or the performance. Thus, encouraging consumer's willingness to purchase the pirated products.

Yet, no matter how good the quality of the pirated products, it is still without guarantee. Therefore, creating a financial risk to the buyers (de Matos et al., 2007). Previous studies showed that if the perceived quality between the genuine products and the pirated products are similar in term of quality, the percentage of consumer purchasing the pirated products rather than the genuine product will be higher (Francis, Burgess and Lu, 2015; Penz and Stottinger, 2005).

Eisend and Schuchert-Guler (2006) stated that product attributes are major determinant of pirated products purchase. Other than that, product ability, appearance, durability, performance and perceived quality are significant to intention to purchase pirated products (Cordell et al., 1996; Phau and Teah, 2009; Kim and Karpova, 2010; Tang et al., 2014). This is further supported by Lu (2013) who believed the same functionality of pirated products influence consumer intention to purchase pirated products. The more similar or acceptable the product attributes, the higher chances for consumer to have intention purchasing pirated products. This is supported by Lu (2013) who agreed that the same quality and features offered by the pirated products influence consumer intention to purchase them. Therefore, this study hypothesized that: -

**Hypothesis 1:** Product attributes are positively related to intention to purchase pirated CDs.

## METHODOLOGY

With the purpose of understanding the influence of product attributes on intention to purchase pirated CDs, quantitative research is applied in this study. Data was collected using an intercept survey at selected night markets in three main cities in Malaysia. There are two main reasons why the present study was conducted at night market. Firstly, night market is the most common place where people purchase the pirated CDs especially pirated movies CDs and DVDs. Secondly, according to the data from the Malaysian Ministry of Domestic Trade, Co-operative and Consumerism, night markets is one of the common place to be inspected by the authority to monitor the pirated CDs and DVDs. Respondents were approached to answer the self-administered questionnaire. As purchase of pirated CDs is a sensitive issue, people might have been reluctant to answer the questionnaires

sincerely. In order to overcome this potential concern, the respondents were notified that this research is purely for academic purpose and their names and information would remain confidential. Following the method by Phau and Teah (2009), every fifth individual that crossed a designated spot at the night market main entrance was approached to participate. Out of the number of respondents intercepted, 74 percent of them agreed (393 respondents) to take part in the survey.

The consumer intention to purchase pirated CDs is operationalized as consumer interest in purchasing pirated CDs (Nordin, 2009). There are three items used to measure intention to purchase which are intention to purchase pirated CDs in future, intention to use pirated CDs and intention to recommend pirated CDs to others. Product attributes are operationalized as the function of the pirated CDS (Eisend and Schuchert-Guler, 2006). There are three items used to measure product attributes of pirated CDs. They are the element of (i) quality, (ii) reliability and (iii) functionality. Quality is defined as the performance level of the pirated CDs. Reliability is defined as ability for repeated use of pirated CDs, and functionality is defined as is the ability of pirated CDs to perform its function. Sample of the items used to measure the variable is shown in **Appendix 1**.

Respondents were asked to consider all items on five-point Likert scale ranging from "1= strongly disagree" to "5= strongly agree". For ease of interpretation, the range of five-point Likert-scales were categorized into equal sized categories of low, moderate and high. Therefore, the mean scores of variables less than 2.33 [ $4/3 +$  lowest value (1)] is considered as low; scores of 3.67 [highest value (5)- $4/3$ ] is considered high and those in between considered moderate.

Table 1 reveals the reliability and mean value for both variables. Both of the variables reveal reliability values with coefficient alpha ( $\alpha$ ) more than 0.7, indicating satisfactory reliability for measurement adopted. The Cronbach alpha of more than 0.7 suggests the specified indicators are sufficient for use (Nunnally, 1978). The mean value of 3.69 for intention variable indicates that the respondents possess high intention to purchase pirated CDs. Cumulatively, it implies that respondents tend to display high intention to purchase pirated CDs in the future, use pirated CDs and recommend pirated CDs to others. With the mean value of 3.71 for product attributes of pirated CDs indicates that the attributes of pirated CDs are perceived as high among respondents. In general, it means that respondents tend to perceive pirated CDs as high-quality performance, able to be repeatedly use and perform its function.

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The sample was randomly composed, including the respondents from various age, employment status, and education groups, which provided us with a random sample. From the 393 respondents who participated, 60 percent were female (60%) and 40 percent were male (40%). Majority of the respondents were at the age of 21 to 30 years (68%). The majority of the respondents are working in private organization (33%), followed by government servants (18%) and self-employed (13%). Majority of the respondents are high school leavers (46%), followed by degree holders (20%) with majority of income between USD 300 to USD 500 (44%).

**Table 1:** Reliability Values

Item	Alpha value ( $\alpha$ )	Mean value
Intention to purchase	0.75	3.69
Product attributes (quality, reliability and functionality)	0.83	3.71

**Table 2:** Correlation between Variables

Item	Intention to purchase	Product attributes
Intention to purchase	1	
Product attributes (quality, reliability and functionality)	0.63**	1

Note: \*\* $p \leq 0.01$

With regards to the relationship between product attributes of pirated CDs (quality, reliability and functionality) and intention to purchase pirated CDs, the correlation was generally positive ( $r$  value=0.63). With reference to this, product attribute elements of pirated CDs namely quality, reliability and functionality have positive influences on consumers' intention to purchase pirated CDs as can be seen in Table 2 ( $r = 0.63$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This signifies that product attributes of pirated CDs as perceived by respondents which are the performance quality of pirated CD, the reliability to repeatedly use pirated CDs and the ability of pirated CDs to perform its function give positive influence on promoting consumers' intention to purchase pirated CDs.

In order to test the hypothesis, a simple regression analysis was conducted to analyze the influence of independent variable i.e product attributes of pirated CDs on intention to purchase pirated CDs, which is the dependent variable. Result generated is shown in Table 3 below. The F-statistic and standardized beta value ( $\beta$ ) of 0.578 ( $F = 5.663$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) indicates that the relationship between independent and dependent variables is positively significant. The adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.52 indicates that product attributes of pirated CDs as perceived by the respondents (quality, reliability and functionality of pirated CDs) explain 52 percent of the variation in intention to purchase pirated CDs. This value demonstrates that product attributes of pirated CDs as perceived by the respondents which comprised of performance quality of pirated CD, the reliability to repeatedly use pirated CDs and the ability of pirated CDs to perform its function contribute to 52 percent to consumers' intention to purchase pirated CDs. The other 48 percent might be contributed by other factors which were not investigate in this study This test reveals evidence to support the hypothesis for the influence of product attributes of pirated CDs on intention to purchase pirated CDs.

**Table 3:** Simple Regression of Product Attributes of Pirated CDs on Intention to Purchase Pirated CDs

Variable	Standardized $\beta$	t-stat	P-value
Product Attributes (quality, reliability and functionality)	0.578	6.53	0.00**

Note:  $n = 393$ ; adjusted  $R^2 = 0.52$ ;  $F = 5.663$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$

## DISCUSSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

In the light of the above cited findings and discussion, we can hereby conclude that the element of product attributes of pirated CDs as perceived by the consumers is an important factor influencing consumers' intention to buy pirated CDs. The significant result for the influence of product attributes on intention to purchase is supported by Eisend and Schuchert-Guler (2006) and Phau and Teah (2009). Both studies believed that product attributes of pirated CDs such as quality, function and performance have positive influences on consumer intention to purchase pirated CDs. This demonstrates that when consumer perceived the function between the original and pirated CDs is similar, it could encourage them to purchase the pirated one. With the advance of the technology today, the pirated CDs nowadays offer almost a similar quality as the originals. This could be one of the reason why consumer choose to purchase pirated CDs. Our findings verified that price is not the sole determinant in the consumer's decision to purchase pirated CDs. Other variables might come into play, especially those of perceived product attributes towards pirated CDs.

The implication for policy makers and original CDs producers is that anti-counterfeiting strategies are multifaceted. The positive influence of product attributes factor on consumers' intention to purchase pirated CDs brings good news for original CDs producers in their efforts to combat with piracy activity. We realize that consumers buy pirated CDs only when they notice the CDs possess certain important attributes that are similar to the originals. Meaning to say, if the pirated CDs could serve the same function as the originals, the consumers are likely to purchase them. The similarities, quality and image portrayed by the pirated version compared to the originals are important features in determining purchase behavior. This implied that original CDs producers should made tremendous efforts to distinguish their original CDs as much as possible from the pirated versions, by focusing on appearance and quality differences. Providing warranties, guarantees and after-sale services are some of the actions that original producers can offer to consumers to differentiate their products from the pirated. In the same vein, the inclusion of additional security features on the CDs can provide another layer of protection and, while may not be mandated by governments, can help original CDs producers protect themselves from being pirated.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

At this point, some limitations of the study may also be observed. As with any other studies using a consumer sample, the findings of this study might not represent consumers at large. A replication of this study with more general consumers of a wide range in their characteristics might be necessary to attest the applicability of the model to the broader public. The study was conducted in the selected geographical context in Malaysia. Therefore, the geographical context may be noted while appreciating the study. Being a cross-sectional investigation with a particular sample, it may not be generalizable, unless further validating studies are conducted



across countries. In addition, although many types of pirated CDs are available in the market, the respondents were selected for any type of pirated CDs they purchased. Thus the investigation covers pirated CDs buyers in a general scope rather than of specific type. Last but not least, future research may call for adopting qualitative study along with quantitative validation as well.

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### **Attributes of Pirated CDs (adapted from Eisend and Schuchert-Guler, 2006)**

Pirated CDs can be repeatedly used as like the original CD.

I believe the performance of the pirated CD is almost similar to the original CD.

Despite the low price, I believe pirated CDs can perform its function well, similar to the original CDs.

### **Intention to Purchase Pirated CDs (adapted from Nordin, 2009)**

I will definitely purchase pirated CDs in the future.

I am more than happy to use pirated CDs if I purchase it.

I will recommend pirated CDs to my family and friends.